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and the absorbent element, and preferably the barrier layer thereof. It should be understood that in either of the embodiments of FIGS. 15 or 18, the absorbent element can be fixedly detachably connected to the front and back body panels at the locations 670, such that the absorbent element can be removed and replaced with another element after each use.

Please rewrite the paragraph beginning at page 21, line 23 as follows:

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The cover sheet 42 and/or outer cover 308 also can be made of elastic materials such as Lycra® laminates, wherein the Lycra® strands are laminated between two layers of nonwovens, stretch bonded laminates (SBL's), neck bonded laminates (NBL's) or elastomeric films or nonwovens. In this embodiment, the outer cover extends or stretches outwardly to accommodate the swelling absorbent material. In such an embodiment, the secondary bond regions may be optional, wherein the cover sheet maintains a thin profile when the absorbent material is not exposed to liquid, and wherein the cover sheet extends to accommodate the absorbent material when insulted with liquid.

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Applicants have made numerous amendments to the drawings as set forth in the attached drawing amendment.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 17, 40-42 and 46-48, rewrite claims 1-16, 18-39, 44 and 45 and add new claim 49 as follows:

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1. (Amended) An absorbent garment comprising:

a chassis having a body side surface and a garment side surface; and
an absorbent element connected to said garment side surface of said chassis at

a first location and having a first portion detachably connected to at least one of a second portion of said absorbent element and said garment side surface of said chassis at a second location, wherein said first and second portions of said absorbent element are each formed on an outer surface of said absorbent element, said absorbent element comprising an absorbent material expandable from at least a first condition to a second condition, wherein said first portion of said absorbent element detaches from said at least one of said second portion of said absorbent element and said garment side surface of said chassis at at least a portion of said second location when said absorbent material expands to said second condition.

B7 2. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element comprises a cover sheet fixedly connected to said garment side surface of said chassis at said first location, wherein said cover sheet comprises said first and second portions of said absorbent element, wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said chassis at said second location, wherein said cover sheet supports said absorbent material.

3. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element is fixedly connected to said chassis at said first location with a primary bond, and wherein said first portion of said absorbent element is detachably connected to said at least one of said second portion of said absorbent element and said chassis at said second location with a secondary bond, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond.

4. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material has a first and second side, and further comprising a topsheet disposed adjacent said first side of said absorbent material.

5. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said second location is positioned laterally outboard from said first location.

6. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent and wherein said first location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element.

7. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 6 wherein said second location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element in a parallel relationship with said first location.

8. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent, wherein said first location comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending primary locations, and wherein said second location comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary locations.

9. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said second location comprises a bonding region defined by a longitudinally extending length and a laterally extending width.

10. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 6 wherein said absorbent element comprises opposite ends, wherein at least one of said ends is fixedly connected to said chassis.

11. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 10 wherein said fixed connection between said at least one of said ends of said absorbent element and said chassis are spaced apart from said longitudinally extending first location.

12. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material

comprises a first fold having opposite side edges and a second and third fold attached to said opposite side edges of said first fold respectively and extending inwardly in an overlying relationship with said first fold.

13. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material comprises a plurality of disconnected layers.

14. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 2 wherein said absorbent material is not attached to said cover sheet.

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15. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said chassis comprises a top sheet and an extensible outer cover.

16. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said chassis comprises a front and back panel, and wherein said absorbent element connects said front and back panels.

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18. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 4 wherein said topsheet is interfolded with said absorbent material.

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19. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 2 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said second portion of said cover sheet.

20. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 19 wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet comprise overlying folds of said cover sheet.

21. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 2 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said chassis.

22. (Amended) A method of absorbing exudates excreted from a user with an absorbent garment comprising:

providing a chassis having a body side surface and a garment side surface and an absorbent element connected to said garment side surface of said chassis at a first location, said absorbent element having a first portion detachably connected to at least one of a second portion of said absorbent element and said garment side surface of said chassis at a second location, wherein said absorbent element comprises an absorbent material and wherein said first and second portions of said absorbent element are each formed on an outer surface of said absorbent element;

securing said chassis to a body of the user;

insulating said absorbent material with said exudates and thereby causing said absorbent material to expand; and

disconnecting said first portion of said absorbent element from said at least one of said second portion of said absorbent element and said garment side surface of said chassis at at least a portion of said second location as said absorbent material expands while maintaining said connection between said absorbent element and said garment side surface of said chassis at said first location.

23. (Amended) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element comprises a cover sheet fixedly connected to said chassis at said first location and wherein said cover sheet comprises said first and second portions of said absorbent element, wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said chassis at said second location, wherein said cover sheet supports said absorbent material.

24. (Amended) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element is fixedly connected to said chassis at said first location with a primary bond, and wherein said first portion of said absorbent element is detachably connected to at least one of said second portion of said absorbent element and said chassis at said second location with

a secondary bond, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond.

25. (Amended) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent material has a first and second side, and further comprising a topsheet disposed adjacent said first side of said absorbent material.

26. (Amended) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent and wherein said second location is positioned laterally outboard from said first location.

27. (Amended) The method of claim 26 wherein said first location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element.

28. (Amended) The method of claim 27 wherein said second location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element in a parallel relationship with said first location.

29. (Amended) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent, wherein said first location comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending first locations, and wherein said second location comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary locations.

30. (Amended) The method of claim 23 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said second portion of said cover sheet.

31. (Amended) The method of claim 23 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said chassis.

32. (Amended) A method of assembling an absorbent garment comprising:

providing a chassis having a body side surface and a garment side surface;
providing an absorbent element comprising an absorbent material;
bonding said absorbent element with a primary bond to said garment side surface of said chassis at at least one primary bond region; and
bonding a first portion of said absorbent element to at least one of a second portion of said absorbent element and said garment side surface of said chassis with a secondary bond at at least one secondary bond region, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond and wherein said first and second portions of said absorbent element are each formed on an outer surface of said absorbent element.

33. (Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein said first and second bond regions are laterally spaced.

34. (Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein at least one said primary bond region comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending primary bond regions, and wherein said at least one secondary bond region comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary bond regions.

35. (Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein said absorbent material comprises a first fold having opposite side edges and a second and third fold attached to said opposite side edges of said first fold respectively and extending inwardly in an overlying relationship with said first fold.

36. (Amended) The method of claim 32 further comprising disposing a topsheet adjacent one side of said absorbent element.

37. (Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein said chassis comprises spaced apart front and back panels, and further comprising bonding said absorbent element to a garment side surface of each of said front and back panels with a said primary bond.

38. (Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein said absorbent element further comprises a cover sheet, wherein said cover sheet is bonded to said garment side surface of said chassis with said at least one primary bond at said primary bond region, wherein said cover sheet comprises said first and second portions of said absorbent element, wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is bonded to said second portion of said cover sheet with said secondary bond at said at least one secondary bond region.

39. (Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein said absorbent element further comprises a cover sheet, wherein said cover sheet is bonded to said chassis with said primary bond at said primary bond region, and wherein said cover sheet comprises said first and second portions of said absorbent element, wherein said first portion of is bonded to said chassis with said secondary bond at said secondary bond region.

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sub 44. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 43 wherein said first location comprises a pair of first locations spaced laterally inward from each of said opposite side edges respectively.

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45. (Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 43 wherein a first portion of said bodyside surface of said absorbent element is further connected to at least one of a second portion of said absorbent element and said outer surface of said chassis at a second location positioned between said first location and one of said opposite side edges of said absorbent element, wherein said absorbent element comprises an absorbent material expandable from at least a first condition to a second condition, and wherein said first portion of said absorbent element detaches from said at least one of said second portion and said chassis at at least a portion of said second location when said absorbent material expands to said second condition.